

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,  
Key City Iron Works Foundry  
898 Jackson Street  
Dubuque  
Dubuque County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-AK

HABS  
IOWA,  
31-DUBU,  
13-AK-

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**PHOTOGRAPHS  
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver Colorado 80225

## Key City Iron Works Foundry

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Site Location: 898 Jackson Street  
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa  
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 8.13;14  
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque North Iowa 7.5'  
UTM coordinates: 15.692000.4708020  
Lot dimensions : 78'x 45': .08 acre  
Lot description: West 45' of City Lot  
399 and North 1/2 of City Lot 400  
Present Owner: Jack R. Redmond  
Present Usage: machine shop  
Present Condition : fair

Overall dimensions: 2-story original block: 30'x 45';  
1-story rear addition: 47'6"x 45'.

Orientation : west

Architectural Plan type : rectangular, two-story; one story additions.

Description : Foundation: coursed limestone perimeter walls.

Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond on main block and side addition; concrete block on rear addition.

Roof : flat composition roof with brick parapet walls.

Chimneys : one brick exterior chimney integral with north side wall.

Windows : openings for all original wood double-hung windows either infilled with smaller replacement sash or covered with plywood; all have brick segmental arch heads and stone lug sills.

Openings : double-leaf primary entrance centered on front of main block; two garage openings (one with original wood double-leaf sliding doors, the other boarded over) on front of side addition; all doorways with brick segmental arch heads.

Details : modestly corbeled brick courses on front parapet; cable-stayed iron loading boom bolted to front of main block; wood KEY CITY IRON WORKS sign mounted to front wall of main block; terra cotta coping tiles on parapet of side addition.

Construction Date : 1890

Architecture Style: 19th Century Functional

Physical History : About 1882 blacksmith Frank Zehetner and Alexander Hodel formed the Key City Iron Works, a small-scale foundry and machine shop on Eighth Street between Iowa and Clay (now Central). Eight years later the two

partners built this brick block on the corner of Jackson and Ninth streets to house their growing business. The building consisted of a 30'x 45' two-story front section facing Jackson Street and a single-story rear wing along Ninth Street. With machines operated by steam-driven belts and lighting provided by candles and gasoline torches, the factory was organized with a business office (still in place) in the northwest corner of the first floor, a machine shop behind this and a foundry in the one-story rear wing. The upper floor was used for storage. From this factory the men produced ornamental trim, trip hammers and wood shavers, among other iron items. By 1909 Zehetner had taken on a new partner, Louis Pitschner, and had erected a single-story side addition to infill between the original building and the Wieneke-Hoerr Company pickle factory [HABS No. IA-160-AJ]. This new structure housed a blacksmith shop. Since then the business has changed hands but is still called the Key City Iron Works today. The machinery has been repaired, replaced and updated, but some of the lathes and drills still use the centralized belt-and-pulley system (now electrically driven). Other than the recent replacement of the original one-story rear foundry wing with a similarly sized concrete block addition and the infill of some of the windows, the building's exterior remains unchanged.

**Significance:** More a machine shop than a full-scale foundry, the Key City Iron Works could hardly compare in production and facilities with such Dubuque giants as the Novelty Iron Works and Iowa Iron Works. But while the larger companies have ceased operations, this firm is historically significant in its continued operation. The building is architecturally important as a representative example of 19th Century Functional design. Its exterior and interior are both extremely well preserved, down to the loading boom on the front and much of the machinery inside. A pristine site, the Key City Iron Works has tremendous interpretive value and is thus one of the most important structures in Dubuque's industrial district.

**References:** Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.  
Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1879, 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.  
Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory: 1882-1923.  
Dubuque County Assessment Record: 4-5-3-5.  
Iowa Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Cultural Resources Assessment."  
*Dubuque Telegraph-Herald*: 1 August 1911, 23 March 1913.

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